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AUTHOR Rochin, Refugio I.
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ABSTRACT

The stereotype of rural Hispanic Americans often connotes social problems such as poverty, illegal immigration, and migrant workers. In reality, rural Hispanics are part of a larger demographic trend changing the balance of power and socioeconomic relations among ethnic groups. Part 1 of this paper reviews demographic information. Hispanic-Americans are a heterogeneous people from different racial, national, religions, and economic backgrounds. Relatively young and concentrated geographically by ethnic origin, this population experiences high rates of unemployment, poverty, and educational disadvantage. Schooling and employment issues need high priority to effectively engage Hispanic-Americans in the U.S. economy. Part 2 focuses on the history and contemporary roles of Hispanics in "rural" America, including the often-ignored contributions of Hispanics to U.S. farming and livestock production, the origins of migrant and seasonal workers, the unionization of farm labor, immigration and related issues of mechanization, and the formation of rural colonias (Southwest communities with majority Hispanic populations). Part 3 discusses Mexican-Americans in agriculture, arguing that U.S. agriculture is going through a phase of "Mexicanization" instead of the predicted "mechanization" of the 1970s and 1980s. Implications for U.S. agriculture and workers of the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the United States are examined. This paper contains 47 references. (SV)

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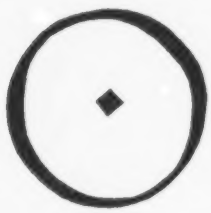
Hispanic Americans in the rural economy: Conditions, issues and probable future adjustments

Refugio I. Rochin*



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Fields of pain

> The families who harvest California's fruits and vegetables are no better off today than the fictional Joad family immortalized in John Steinbeck's classic, Grapes of Wrath. In some respects conditions are worse. The Joads were citizens. Today's farmworkers are almost exclusively from Mexico. They speak little English. Many are here illegally and therefore easily exploited. They live in barns, caves and plywood shacks amid hunger and squalor. They work with pesticides more dangerous than anything the Joads might have encountered... But workers desperate to feed their families don't complain because they know there are too many others willing to take their place. They fear being blacklisted [by labor contractors and employers]. They fear deportation.
>
> Editorial, The Sacramento Bee
> December 16, 1991 (p.B14)

Thus begins another oft-repeated chapter in the life of California's farmworkers, a life of working in "fields of pain." In a few words the situation of rural workers is described and left for others to "solve." In many respects the situation is true but, unfortunately, it is stereotypical and narrow. While California's Mexican farmworkers face many forms of exploitation, what I am concerned about are the important ramifications that are often ignored.

*University of California, Davis

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In my eighteen years as a professor in the University of California, I have found that most Anglos and non-Hispanics usually think of rural Chicanos as poor farmworkers only. Few people have asked me about Mexican-Americans or Chicanos as owner-operators of farms or as non-farm rural residents. Few have wanted to know if Hispanic-Americans have another legacy in rural America that could be incorporated into school curriculums. Instead, most non-Hispanics regard all rural Chicanos as poor, downtrodden Mexican immigrants who come to work as hired hands.

My presentation is to deliver this message: when we address conditions of rural Hispanic-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Latinos, Chicanos, etc., we should no longer stereotype them as migrant and seasonal workers, illegal aliens, and transient groups only. Instead, we should view rural Hispanics as Americans who are part of a larger demographic trend which is changing the balance of power and socioeconomic relations between different ethnic groups. Also, when we study rural Hispanics, we must think in terms of their attributes, characteristics and unique differences which contribute to the United States. Rural Hispanics should not connote social problems. They are U.S. assets, not liabilities.

In this paper, I attempt to clarify my message by addressing several distinctions; including, for example, the demographics, social features, and issues of rural Hispanic-Americans. My paper has three parts. I begin in Part I with general information on the national traits of the Hispanic population of the United States, as well as its sub-groups—Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American and "other Hispanics" (persons identifying themselves as Spanish, Spanish-American, Hispano, Latino etc.). This information shows the diversity among Hispanic-Americans and their different concerns. Part II focuses on the history and contemporary roles of Hispanics in "rural" America. Here I comment on the often ignored contributions of Hispanics to U.S. farming, crop and livestock production; the origins of migrant and seasonal workers; the unionization of farm labor; immigration and related issues of mechanization; and the formation of rural colonias, Southwest communities with majority populations of Hispanic-Americans. My intent in Part II is to get away from the narrow view of Mexican-Americans as mainly migrant and seasonal workers. Part III provides a brief discussion of Mexican-Americans in agriculture. In this section I argue that U.S. agriculture is going through a phase of "Mexicanization" instead of the predicted "mechanization" of the 1970s and 1980s. In this regard, I mention briefly the implications for U.S. agriculture and workers of a Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the United States.

Table 1. Change in the Hispanic origin population, by type of origin, March 1982 to 1991* (Numbers in thousands)

Origin	March 1991	March 1982**	Percent change, 1982-1991**	Percent of Hispanics 1991
Mexican	13,421	9,642	39	63
Puerto Rican	2,382	2,051	16	11
Cuban	1,055	950	11	5
Central and South American	2,951	1,523	94	13
Other Hispanic	1,628	1,198	36	8
Total Hispanic Population	21,437	15,364	40	100

*Data are for the civilian non-institutional population of the United States.

**Simple average.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 455, *The Hispanic Population in the United States*, March 1991, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1991.

Part I. Hispanic-Americans

Overview

Hispanic-Americans are of many racial, religious, economic, and cultural backgrounds and they experience widely varying levels of prosperity and success in the United States. The ancestors of some lived in parts of the United States long before these regions became part of the nation. This is particularly evident in northern New Mexico and adjoining Colorado where "Hispanos" can trace their heritage back to the 17th Century. Many other Hispanics are first and second generation Americans.

Immigration has considerable bearing on the status of Hispanic-Americans. Nearly one-half of all Hispanic-Americans are foreign born. In 1989 the United States admitted just over 1 million Hispanic immigrants. More than half were from Mexico (400,000) and Central America (101,000). More than half of these Hispanic immigrants intended to reside in California (U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1991 p. 11).

In 1991 the U.S. Census Bureau counted over 21.4 million Hispanic Americans, a 40 percent increase since 1982 (Table 1). Between 1982 and 1991 the Mexican-American population increased 39 percent to 13.4 million (Table 1). This rate was faster than the rate for Puerto Ricans (16 percent and 2.4 million) or Cubans (11 percent and 1 million), and much faster than the national growth rate of about10 percent. But Central and South American Hispanics grew the fastest, at 94 percent to 3 million. The U.S. Census Bureau projections expect the Hispanic population to increase by 27 percent and to reach 25.2 million by the turn of the century, bringing their share of the total U.S. population to 10 percent in the year 2000.

Geographic Distribution

Hispanic-Americans are found all over the United States, but 85 percent reside in just nine states and half in two states alone: California (7.7 million) and Texas (4.3 million) (1991 U.S. Statistical Abstract.). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Mexican Americans (Chicanos) comprise 63 percent of all U.S. Hispanics and are highly concentrated in the Southwestern states of California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. That the Hispanic presence in the Southwest is

overwhelmingly Chicano is indicated by the fact that 83 percent of all southwestern Hispanics were of Mexican origin in 1990. Puerto Rican Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, at just 11 percent, but they dominate the Hispanic population of New York City. Cuban Americans are the majority of Hispanics in south Florida, although they are just 5 percent of all U.S. Hispanics. Central and South Americans are 13 percent of U.S. Hispanics, but are not as geographically concentrated as the other groups. The remaining 8 percent trace their lineage to Spain or are persons identifying themselves generally as Hispanic, Spanish, Hispano, Latino, and so on. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1991.)

Age and education

The Hispanic population's median age of just over 24 years is about eight years lower than the median age of non-Hispanics (32). Mexicans are the youngest Hispanic subgroup, with a median age of just 24, according to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 1991). Cubans are the oldest, with a median age of 39. Cubans are also the best educated Hispanic subgroup: 20 percent of Cuban Americans aged 25 and older have attended at least four years of college. This share slips to 15 percent for "other" Hispanics, 10 percent for Puerto Ricans, and 5 percent for Mexicans.

Low levels of educational attainment characterize a high proportion of Hispanics. Their educational deficiencies are far more serious than for African-Americans and Native Americans. Nearly 40 percent of Hispanic youngsters drop out of high school, for example, compared with about 17 percent of African-Americans and 14 percent of Whites (Bean and Tienda,1987). As is the case with African-Americans, action by both the public and private sectors is needed to break the cycle of under-achievement in schooling which affects increasing numbers of Hispanic Americans.

Workforce participation

About 9.5 million (7.6 percent) of the U.S. labor force is Hispanic American (U.S. Census, March 1991). From 1980 to 1987 the number of Hispanics at work jumped 43 percent or 2.3 million, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the nation's employment growth, compared with a growth of 15 percent for African Americans.

The greatest increase in the Hispanic workers was among those of Mexican origin, followed by "other Hispanics" (Cattan, 1988).

Looking ahead, Hispanics are estimated by the Hudson Institute to account for about 22 percent of the growth of the labor force between now and the year 2000; altogether, a growth of about 5.0 million additional Hispanic workers (Johnston, 1987). Hispanics' rate of increase alone is estimated at 74 percent, increasing their share in the total work force to 10.2 percent in 2000.

In March 1991, the labor force participation rate of Hispanic males was higher than that of non-Hispanic males (78 percent versus 74 percent) (U.S Bureau of the Census, March, 1991). In contrast, the labor force participation rate for non-Hispanic females was higher than that of Hispanic females (57 percent and 51 percent, respectively). However, the unemployment rate of Hispanic males in March 1991 was higher than that of non-Hispanic males (10.6 percent and 7.8 percent, respectively). A similar pattern is evident among females, about 9.2 percent unemployment for Hispanic females versus 5.9 percent for non-Hispanic females. In essence, Hispanic-American adults are very active in the labor force. But despite their "labor force participation," defined by "persons working or looking for work," many end up unemployed for much of the year.

Occupational patterns

Occupationally, Hispanic men and women have different patterns of employment compared to non-Hispanic men and women. In 1991 nearly 50 percent of Hispanic males (16 and over) were employed as "operators, fabricators and laborers" and " in precision production, craft and repair" occupations (U.S. Census, March 1991). On the other hand, fewer than 40 percent of non-Hispanic men were employed in these areas. Hispanic males are more likely to be employed in "farming, forestry, and fishing" than non-Hispanic males, 8.6 percent versus 3.7 percent, respectively. For females, the percent of Hispanics employed in "farming, forestry, and fishing" was 1.2 percent compared to 0.9 percent for non-Hispanic females (U.S. Bureau of the Census, March, 1991).

Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic women are usually concentrated in "technical, sales and administrative support" occupations, 39.8 and 44.3 percent, respectively in 1991. However, far more non-Hispanic women are in "managerial and professional specialty" than Hispanic women, 28.0 percent compared to 15.8 percent in 1991 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1991).

Income and poverty

In 1991, the median income of Hispanic families ($23,400) was about 64 percent of the median of non-Hispanic families ($36,300). In 1980, the median income of Hispanic families was 67 percent of that of non-Hispanic families, $20,297 to $30,211, respectively. Clearly, the median income of Hispanic families is falling further behind that of non-Hispanics.

Hispanic families are more likely to be in poverty than non-Hispanic families. Based on 1990 income figures, 25 percent of Hispanic families fell below the poverty level, as compared to 9.5 percent of non-Hispanic families. Since Hispanic families were larger in 1991 than non-Hispanic families (3.80 persons and 3.13 persons, respectively), Hispanic families contain more children in poverty. In fact, over one-third (38.4 percent) of Hispanic children were living in poverty in 1990 as compared to about one-fifth (18.3 percent) of non-Hispanic children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1991).

Summation

Hispanic-Americans constitute a significant, heterogeneous and complex set of people who themselves come from different national origins. They are concentrated geographically by ethnic origin and experience high rates of unemployment, poverty, and educational deprivation. But they are young. If new efforts to educate and employ Hispanic-Americans are to succeed

where earlier efforts have failed, then these efforts will have to respond to their geographic concentrations and different cultural backgrounds and conditions. The challenge will be to address many recent immigrants who speak Spanish and end up in low wage occupations. Schooling, educational attainment and employment issues will need high priority in order to effectively engage Hispanic-Americans in the U.S. economy. Especially now as their numbers become increasingly important in the labor force.

Part II. Hispanics of rural America[1]

Rural population: An overview

Little is written about the general status of Hispanics in rural America except for their work as migrant and seasonal farm workers. As a group, however, there are approximately 2.0 million Hispanics who reside permanently in nonmetropolitan counties of America (Lyson, 1991). Compared to rural Whites (52 million) and Blacks (5 million) Hispanics constitute a small proportion of the rural population. But in the 1980s, the number of Hispanics residing on rural farms increased by 59,000 from 78,000 while the rural farm population of Whites declined by over a half million residents (Table 2). Moreover, since 1987 the number of "rural farm" Hispanics has been greater than the number of "rural farm" Blacks, 137,000 to 88,000, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. White, Black, and Hispanic population by rural residence: 1980-1987 (Numbers in thousands)

	Rural		Rural Farm		Annual Percent Change
	1980	1989	1980	1989	Rural Farm
White	54,087	60,920	5,432	4,678	–1.6
Black	3,899	4,148	111	88	–2.5
Hispanic	1,471	1,782	78	137	+6.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Residents of Farms and Rural Areas: 1989"

Note: The Rural Nonfarm Population can be calculated by subtracting the Rural Farm from the Rural Population.

Just as in the cities, rural Hispanics tend to fare worse than their white neighbors. To begin with, rural Hispanics are employed in a much narrower band of industries and occupations, especially in the West. As indicated by Lyson (1991), over 20 percent of Hispanic men (25 years old or older) hold an agriculturally related job and few are employed in "services" or "trade." Employment of rural white men in the West, on the other hand, is more evenly distributed across industries. Rural Hispanic women in the West, like Hispanic men, are overrepresented in agriculture, "quadruple the ratio of non-Hispanic white women in agriculture" (Lyson, p. 11). Nonetheless, approximately 40 percent of rural Hispanic men work in construction and manufacturing and a majority of rural Hispanic women (53.6 percent) work in "services" (Lyson, 1991, p. 10). Although both Hispanic men and women are disproportionately employed in agriculture, they can be found in other occupations.

Related to these occupational patterns are unequal household incomes between Hispanic and White workers. As indicated in Table 3, relatively more Hispanic households have incomes lower than $7,500 than White households. Also, few rural Hispanic households had incomes above $40,000 compared to White households. Moreover, between 1979 and 1987, the income distribution for rural Hispanics worsened as fewer Hispanic households were in the top income quintile and more were in the lower quintiles (Table 3).

Table 3. Income distribution for rural White and Hispanic households, 1979-1987

	White		Hispanic	
Quintile	1979	1987	1979	1987
Top 20%	22.9	15.0	11.7	6.6
Next 20%	25.6	21.2	17.1	15.3
Middle 20%	23.9	24.0	23.1	20.9
Next 20%	17.3	22.7	27.8	31.2
Bottom 20%	10.3	17.1	19.3	26.0
Percent of households with income in 1979 and 1987:				
Less than $7,500*	9.9	10.4	14.5	15.4
More than $40,000*	23.6	23.7	14.6	12.3

*1987 dollars

Source: Lyson, 1991; modified from Table 2

Not surprising, poverty rates are significantly higher for rural Hispanics compared to rural Whites. In 1989, rural poverty rates were 40 percent for African-Americans, 35 percent for Mexican-Americans, and 30 percent for American Indians. Poverty rates for rural Whites stood at nearly 13 percent in the same year (Snipp, et al., 1992).

The low incomes of rural Hispanic workers are also reflected by the counties they live in. According to Lyson (1991), rural Hispanics are highly concentrated within the nation's poorest nonmetropolitan counties. On the basis of Lyson's ranking of U.S. counties from top to bottom based on the average income of their workers, the average income rank of the 82 counties in which Hispanics account for more than 30 percent of the population would be 2,339 out of 3,094 U.S. counties. The majority of such Hispanic counties are in the Southwest, mostly in Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Features of Hispanics in agriculture

Some of the social and economic characteristics of Hispanics employed in agriculture in 1980 are noteworthy. In line (1), Table 4, we see that less than half of the Hispanics who worked in agriculture lived in rural areas, 102,877 out of 255,265. This suggests that many commuted to work in agriculture. Line (2) compares the ages of different Hispanics working in agriculture and line (3) the number employed by residence. Also, line (4) indicates that Hispanics living on farms, employed in agriculture, had higher median incomes than rural Hispanics who did not live on farms. Moreover, the incidence of poverty was relatively lower for Hispanics living on farms, line (7). Apparently, the level of schooling completed is relatively low for nonfarm residents compared to farm residents, line (8). Combining that information suggests that Hispanics with farm ownership or farm

[1] Some of this section is based on Rochin and de la Torre, 1991.

residence live better than Hispanics who do not live on farms but who work in agriculture nonetheless. Judging from the data in lines (9) and (10), Hispanics in agriculture are often from abroad, which suggests that they are more than likely recent immigrants.

Table 4. Social and economic characteristics of Hispanic persons employed in agriculture: 1980

	Total Employed in Agriculture	Total in Rural Areas Employed in Agriculture	Total Living On Farms and Employed in Agriculture
(1) Persons 16 years and older	255,265	102,877	15,874
(2) Median Age of (1)	32.6	33.5	36.0
(3) Number of (1) With Income	238,958	96,653	14,956
(4) Median Income of (3)	$6,651	$6,760	$7,720
(5) Mean of (3)	$7,799	$7,725	$9,584
(6) Number of (1) in Poverty	67,407	30,497	3,633
(7) Percent of (1) in Poverty	26.4	29.6	22.9
(8) Percent High School Graduates	15.9	14.3	20.3
(9) Number of (1) with Residence in 1975:			
In Same House	101,052	43,779	7,935
In Different House in U. S.	107,737	39,572	5,875
Abroad	43,887	17,629	2,032
(10) Percent of (1) Abroad in 1975	17.2	17.1	12.8

Source:U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Rural and Farm-Related Population," Subject Reports PC 80-2-9C. The totals include farmworkers and farm operators and managers.

Historic roles

History provides an explanation for the conditions described above. It is not an accident of nature that rural Hispanics are concentrated in the Southwest and in agricultural roles. Moreover, nowhere else has the presence of Mexican Americans been stronger than in the southwest borderlands, where Mexican Americans have been concentrated. But as noted by Carey McWilliams in his revealing book *Factories in the Field* (1971):

> It should never be forgotten that, with the exception of the Indians, Mexicans are the only minority in the United States who were annexed by conquest; the only minority, Indians again excepted, whose rights were specifically safeguarded by treaty provision (p. 103).

That annexation by conquest, however, took all the states of the Southwest away from Mexico and transferred rights of property and U.S. residence away from our earliest Hispanic-Americans. Thus disenfranchised, Mexican Americans were subjected to a harsh future reality, one of deprived riches and inheritances. Even U.S. history books disassociated the development of the Southwest from its Hispanic contributors. The brief account which follows shows how the Mexican legacy of denial and deprivation evolved in the southwest.

Legacy of riches and denial

Less than 150 years ago the vast stretches of the southwest belonged to Mexico and 30 years before that time to Spain. A system of Catholic missions first opened up the Southwest, beginning in San Diego in 1769. The missionaries were devoted to converting California Indians to Catholicism, making them loyal Spanish subjects. Although there is considerable controversy and misgiving about this role of Spaniards in the Southwest, they did make numerous contributions to American farms and ranches. During the mission period, lasting to the early 1830s, the Southwest's first farms and gardens were established, patterned largely after what the missionaries had known in Spain, adapted to a raw new land with what the Spaniards learned from American and Mexican Indians. The Spanish priests and early Mexican settlers developed and disseminated America's first grapes, raisins, apricots, peaches, plums, oranges, lemons, wheat, barley, olives and figs. They also learned to assimilate and adapted the Mesoamerican products of cotton, henequen, and the nutritional indigenous diet of corn, beans, squash (pumpkin), tomatoes, chili peppers, avocados, vanilla, chocolate and a variety of other fruits and vegetables, which are today a part of our agricultural wealth.

The Spaniards, and later the Mexicans who took over the Southwest territory from Spain in 1822, also established the system of large farm estates or *ranchos*. The missions were the training grounds for the first agricultural work force in California, the mission Indians. As Indians were forced or indentured to labor on vast ranchos of several thousand acres each (and there were over 800 land grants recorded), they and *mestizo's* (mixed Spanish-Mexican-Indian blood) developed western techniques of large scale ranching and agriculture. In ranching, Mexicans introduced the rodeo, bronco-busting of the mustang, chaps, spurs, calaboose, stampede, barbecue, and many other ideas we think of as being typically American. In agriculture, our Hispanic forerunners introduced riparian rights and water saving irrigation systems and technologies for the arid Southwest.

So how did the Southwestern Hispanics lose all of this? As described by Acuña (1988), Barrera (1979), McWilliams (1971), Galarza (1976), and others, the annexation by U.S. conquest resulted in the subsequent denial of Hispanic roles in the development of the Southwest. As they have shown, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 resulted in the United States' take-over of most of California, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona and lower Utah. California was the first to become a state in 1850, due in large part to the Gold Rush and a flood of immigrants from the eastern states. Other states joined the union and perpetuated a practice of treating the Southwest as newly conquered and developed terrain.

The rush of U.S. easterners after gold, coupled with completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, opened more areas of the Southwest, with the railroad tycoons getting the lion's share of land. In California's

central valley and south, the Southern Pacific Railroad became the largest landowner in the state with over 20 million acres. In California, former Mexicans (called "Californios") were reduced to a relatively small fraction of the state's population between 1860 and 1900.

Legislative action and contrived judicial proceedings dispossessed nearly all Hispanic title holders to Spanish and Mexican land grants, even though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo contained provisions to honor the former titles. Instead of land remaining in Hispanic hands, extremely large tracts of land went to Anglo settlers. Moreover, the Homestead Act of 1862 gave thousands of Anglo and European settlers 160-acre parcels. Hispanic land losses in New Mexico continue to be disputed to this date (Knowlton, 1985). And in a few nitches of the Southwest, there are still signs that the Hispanic legacy continues in farming and rural communities (Crawford, 1988).

The return of Mexicans as migrant workers

U.S. economic historians note that much of the West's agricultural wealth was due to three "faceless" factors: (1) natural resources; water, climate, land; (2) management and technology; and (3) an abundant labor supply. That is, U.S. economic historians tend to ignore the contributions of different racial and ethnic groups in studying development. But the last factor, of course, refers to the Mexican workers who played a prominent and ever-present role in agricultural development. How did this role begin?

From 1910 to 1917, Mexico was profoundly transformed by its peasant revolution and cries for agrarian reform. The revolution coincided with a growing demand for labor in U.S. agriculture that resulted in a steady flow of Mexican migrants into the United States. By the mid-1920s, Mexican migrants replaced previous farm workers of Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, and other nationalities who had been recruited near the turn of the century to meet the farmers' demands for agricultural labor (Fuller, 1991).

Readily available in growing numbers, Mexican refugees were actively recruited and encouraged to migrate by the organized efforts of growers and agricultural associations. By the 1930s, and thereafter, Mexicans were the largest single group in the fields of California. Their low wages and skilled hard work fueled much American agricultural prosperity. In the 1940s, World War II augmented the need for farm labor to harvest labor-intensive crops. In response, the United States negotiated a deal with Mexico to enable Mexican farm workers to work legally in the United States under temporary contract arrangements (i.e. the Foreign Farm Worker Program). More than 1 million workers would come to the United States to work in the so-called Bracero (translated: hired hands) program during the next years until 1965. At the height of the program in the 1950s, about 10 percent of the U.S. farm labor force were Mexican-based migrant workers employed throughout the U.S., mostly in the southwestern states. They accounted for 40 to 70 percent of the peak work force in crops such as lettuce, cucumbers, melons, oranges and tomatoes. On December 31, 1964, the Bracero program ended. Nonetheless, farm leaders successfully lobbied Washington to allow for employment of Mexican farm workers under Labor Code Section H2 "Temporary Foreign Worker Certification Program." Accordingly, more workers entered the United States provisionally during times that farmers could prove a domestic labor shortage was imminent and employment of foreign workers would not adversely affect the wages or working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. In 1989, about 26,000 jobs were certified under the amended H2A Program (Whitener, 1991, p 14.).

As we enter the 1990s, thousands of workers from Mexico still provide millions of hours of hand labor, in lettuce, cotton, fruits, and vegetables, primarily on some of the large farms Mexicans lost after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Today, the vast majority of migrant and seasonal farm workers in the Southwest are Mexican Americans, most of whom use the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas as a home base. The post-Bracero competition for jobs along the Texas-Mexican border, together with the recruitment drive from midwestern labor markets, has long supported the migratory pattern among Mexican workers of Texas winter residence with annual summer migrations to other parts of the United States. From the Texas valley, migrant streams of workers have traveled as much as 4,000 miles annually to the upper mid-west (the Great Lakes region), to the west coast, and some to the eastern sea-board regions.

For a time the USDA conceptualized three distinct streams of migration for purposes of general reference: the eastern, midwestern, and western paths, beginning and fanning out from south Texas. There is no longer such a patterned or uniform geographic migration as was once thought to exist. Various studies and observations of the past decade indicate that migration is now a much more complex, unpatterned, and unpredictable phenomenon (Dement, 1985). Now we find that most Mexican migrants travel an average of less than 500 miles in pursuit of their work. Analyses of enrolled migrant school children have shown that many families do not move along historic paths or streams and do not necessarily move in large groups (Whitener, 1984). Many so-called "Tex-Mex" migrants have settled in states like Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois, and some continue to work in rural communities where they reside. Unchanged is the fact that many Mexican Americans of Texas are hard workers, going great lengths to find jobs, and the region they come from is one of the poorest in the United States (Maril, 1989).

The symbiosis of Mexican immigration and American agriculture

As indicated above in Part I, recent immigration is a trait of most Hispanic-Americans. But immigration has been due to both a supply of and demand for Hispanic (Mexican) workers. For example, U.S. agriculture's persistent need for seasonal harvest workers has always made farm organizations like the Farm Bureau Federation a lobbyist for liberal immigration policies. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) that passed Congress in 1986 reflects this historic past. It contained provisions to reestablish bracero-like conditions in the event of a labor shortage in the fields. It provided am-

nesty for SAWs (Seasonal Agricultural Workers) and RAWS (Replenishment Agricultural Workers), covering up to 1 million Mexican workers for farm employment. Today, about 75 percent of California's farm workers were born in Mexico and most of the rest are Mexican American or Chicanos. In California's Central Valley, the state's salad bowl of farm products, 87 percent of the workers were born in Mexico; 6 percent were born in the United States; 7 percent were born outside of the United States and Mexico, according to a 1989 survey (Alvarado, Riley, and Mason, 1990). Moreover, based on 361 persons interviewed, Alvarado et. al. found that 33 percent are U.S. citizens; 59 percent are legally in the United States on visas; and 7 percent are "undocumented" residents. One-half reported coming to work in the United States ten or more years ago; slightly under 8 percent reported coming less than four years ago. Almost all come from farm labor backgrounds (Alvarado et al., 1990).

What made IRCA so significant for Hispanic-Americans were the liberal provisions for becoming legal residents in the United States. The Special Agricultural Worker or SAW program permitted aliens who did at least 90 days of qualifying farm work in the 12 months ending May 1, 1986, to apply for temporary resident status. After December 1, 1990, qualified SAW aliens could become Permanent Resident Aliens, (PRAs), permitting them to become legal U.S. residents earlier than nonfarm illegal aliens granted amnesty under IRCA. Once the SAW aliens obtained status as PRAs, they could live in Mexico or another foreign country and commute seasonally to the United States. The SAW program attracted 1.3 million applicants, 54 percent in California, before ending on November 30, 1988. Eighty-one percent were Mexican applicants. The elimination of fraudulent cases, however, may result in only about 600,000 legally approved SAWs.

Since future recipients of PRA status may leave agriculture, IRCA provided for Replenishment Agricultural Workers (RAWs). RAW workers receive temporary U.S. residence visas provided they do at least 90 days of farm work annually for specially designated agricultural activities. After three years, a RAW can apply for a greencard to become a PRA.

Despite SAWs, RAWs, and older rules in the books (e.g., H2-A DOL provisions) allowing farms to employ immigrant workers, there continues to be a flow of undocumented aliens entering the United States. Most are likely to search for employment in the Southwest, many in agriculture.

Although the effects of liberal immigration policy are perhaps most pronounced in California, Mexican immigrants are also becoming an increasingly important part of agricultural workforces in Texas and Florida, the other leading states in fruit and vegetable production. There are indications from North Carolina, Washington, Wisconsin, and New York that the Hispanic component of the farmworker population is increasing steadily. As yet, there are no reliable data on numbers or characteristics of immigrant farmworkers (Martin, 1988).

Farm labor unions and collective bargaining

Farmworker strife and conflict have usually accompanied periods of enlarged Mexican immigration into America's rural economy (Galarza, 1976). The earliest farm labor strikes in California agriculture in the 20th century were organized by Mexicans: in Oxnard in 1903; in Wheatland in 1913; in the Imperial Valley in 1928; in El Monte in 1933; in San Joaquin cotton fields throughout the 1930s and, of course, within memory of most, Delano grape strikes and boycotts beginning for ten years in 1965. In all cases, Mexican field-workers struck for higher wages and better working conditions and the right to engage in collective bargaining (Sosnick, 1978). However the National Labor Relations Act purposely, and to this date, excluded farm labor from its provisions.

As a result of the conflicts between labor and management in California's fields, in 1975 California legislators passed the first mainland law (Hawaii was first in the nation) recognizing farm labor organizations' rights to collective bargaining. Called the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act, most of its provisions were unprecedented in American history, for example, guaranteed access of unions to farms, and democratic elections of officers (Rochin, 1977 and Fuller, 1991). Between 1975 and 1985 hundreds of contracts were signed between unions representing farm workers and farm employers. Nonetheless, since 1985 labor conflicts have increased over issues involving continued unfair labor practices (discrimination in wages and cheating workers), the use of pesticides, immigration impacts, collective bargaining rights, and exploitation by labor contractors, once the arch-enemy of the United Farm Workers.

Part of the explanation for this recent situation has been the decline of the United Farm Worker union, a largely Chicano and Mexican union. Since 1985, the membership and strength of the UFW has diminished. In California, where it is estimated that the union represented more than 100,000 workers in 1982, there are probably fewer than 15,000 workers organized by the UFW today. According to the union's President Cesar Chavez, it was Former Governor Deukmejian's (Republican) administration which undermined the union by biasing the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board in favor of farmers and by underfunding its operations and slowing its responses to unfair labor practices (see interviews with Breton, 1991 and Johnston-Hernandez, 1991).

I believe that the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 also undermined the union's power by legalizing many more Mexican immigrants. Many who were recently legalized as farmworkers knew very little about the UFW union's past struggle, philosophy and purpose. They did not want to join its activities. As many immigrants were legalized as SAWs and RAWs, there was also an abundant supply of workers competing for jobs and less interested in joining politically oriented groups of workers.

Furthermore, the immigrants from Mexico were no longer those with previous connections to the Bracero Program. They included different indigenous groups who came with different ideas about organizing. One, for example, is the group of Oaxacan (Mixtec Indian) field hands who came to join a campaign to organize Mexican Indians like themselves in California. Known collectively as the Comite Civico Popular Mixteco, the

group which was founded in 1981 in one of Mexico's poorest regions, began an organizing drive in San Diego County in 1988 among Indians who were literally living in the fields, in man-made caves and shrub covered areas near urban communities. Today this group is struggling for recognition and bringing forth issues of racial and economic discrimination, both in Mexico and California.

Hispanic farms and farmers

The 1980 Census of Population identified about 12,000 Hispanic farmers (Table 5). Unlike earlier ethnic farm laborers, Mexican field workers have rarely climbed the ladder toward tenancy and ownership of land. The reasons for this are worth considering. One reason may be that Mexicans immigrated after much of the open land had been hand-picked by earlier immigrants, during times when farming was becoming increasingly capital intensive and technical. Another is the low income earned by Mexican workers, too low to accumulate money to buy land and equipment. Many Mexican workers also returned to Mexico where they would acquire land at lower cost with less financial difficulty.

Table 5 indicates the relative paucity of Hispanic farmers and the high number of workers. Notice the ratio of farmers to workers for each respective group. Nationally, there were 1.26 farmers per farm worker in 1980. The ratio for Whites was 1.87, for African Americans 0.17, and for Hispanics 0.06. While Hispanic Americans and African Americans accounted for 33 percent of the farm workers in 1980, they accounted for less than 2 percent of the nation's farmers. It is very unlikely that federal legislation for farmers helps Hispanics and African Americans in rural America. In fact, rural Hispanic Americans and African Americans are practically all excluded from federal legislation covering farm insurance, subsidies, and credit, because their farms are too small to qualify for this support.

Table 5. Farmers and farmworkers in the 1980 Census of Population by ethnic group

	All Farmers		All Farmworkers		Ratio:
Ethnic Group	Total	Percent of Total	Total	Percent of Total	Farmers to Workers
Total	1,101,060	100	874,784	100	1.26
White	1,065,022	97	568,453	65	1.87
African-American	15,814	1	92,600	11	0.17
Hispanic	11,520	1	189,263	22	0.06

Table 6 presents an overview of selected characteristics of Hispanic farms. Nationally, Hispanic-operated farms have increased in number, from 16,183 in 1982 to 17,476 in 1987. In 1987, Hispanic farm acreage was lower than in 1982 and yet there were more farmers. Harvested crop land also decreased from 1.3 million acres in 1982 to 1.2 million in 1987. The overwhelming number of Hispanic farms (73 percent) are below 219 acres, about one-half of the national average. Moreover, Hispanic farmers are primarily tenants, sharecroppers, and part-owners who rarely have marketed sales above $25,000.

Table 6. Selected characteristics of farms operated by persons of Spanish origin: 1987 and 1982

Number of Farms Held by Hispanics	
1987	17,476
1982	16,183
Land in Farms (acres)	
1987	8,340,701
1982	8,872,066
Harvested Acres of Cropland	
1987	1,148,619
1982	1,226,975
Number of Farms in 1987	
Below 219 acres	12,773
220 to 499 acres	2,006
500 acres or more	2,697
Total	17,476
Number of Acres by Tenure, 1987	
Full Owner	2,745,808
Part Owner	3,999,069
Tenants	1,595,824
Number of Farms by 1987 Market Value of Sales	
Less than $2,500	6,225
$2,500 to $9,999	4,978
$10,000 to $19,999	1,828
$20,000 to $24,999	479
$25,000 or more	3,966

Source: U.S. Census Report, CPS P-27, No. 61, 1988 and 1987 Census of Agriculture.

In Colorado and New Mexico, Hispanic and Anglo farming have been found to differ somewhat in cropping patterns and livestock holdings. Hispanic farmers specialize more in alfalfa and sheep whereas Anglo farmers have more potatoes and cattle (Eckert and Gutierrez, 1990).

Table 7 shows that most Hispanic farms and land in farms are found within seven states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington. Combined, they represent 80 percent of all Hispanic farms and 85 percent of land area (see Table 6). In only two states do more than 50 percent of the Hispanic farms have sales of $10,000 or more, namely, California (with 51 percent) and Florida (with 50.2 percent).

During the 1970s, a short-lived movement took place in California to convert Chicano farm workers into owner-operators of cooperative farms, mostly for horticulture production. The efforts were successful so long as the USDA and California's system of Cooperative Extension helped these farmers with technical assistance for production, finance, and marketing. By the mid-1980s most Chicano cooperatives were gone, for a variety of reasons. However, many former cooperative members continued farming as renters and/or sharecroppers, especially in the production of vegetables and strawberries (Rochin, 1985). The sharecropping appears to have been motivated in part by landowners as a way to bypass the state's labor laws, especially the Agricultural

Table 7. Farm operators of Hispanic origin by geographic distribution, 1987

Geographic Area	All Farms		Farms With Sales of $10,000 or more		Percent
	Farms	Land in Farms	Farms	Land in Farms	Farms with > $10,000
U.S. Total (Hispanic)	17,476	8,340,701	6,273	6,393,927	35.9
Selected States					
Arizona	363	364,077	168	325,249	46.3
California	3,471	1,046,104	1,771	970,838	51.0
Colorado	710	402,040	233	281,571	32.8
Florida	624	205,542	313	193,077	50.2
New Mexico	3,013	2,540,060	649	1,727,836	21.5
Texas	5,427	2,444,808	1,421	1,751,470	26.2
Washington	325	61,016	126	56,280	38.8
Subtotal	13,934	7,063,647	4,681	5,306,321	33.6
Subtotal as % of Total	79.7	84.7	74.6	83.0	NA

Source: 1987 Census of Agriculture — Vol. 1 Part 51 "Summary and State Date," Table 35, pp. 414-415.

Labor Relations Act of 1975. As sharecroppers, Chicanos are treated by law as farmers and not as farm workers who can be protected by California's Agricultural Labor Relations Act and other laws covering work conditions and wage rates. Under sharecropping, landlords are protected against federal immigration laws concerning aliens and avoid paying fines, coverage for workers under OSHA, and labor contractor laws. According to Wells (1984)

> Most basically, strawberry sharecropping is a response to a changed balance of power between agricultural labor and capital...In the current context, sharecropping helps landowners cope with the rising cost and uncertainty of labor. Far from hindering rational production, modern sharecropping facilitates and is recreated by capitalist accumulation (1984, pp. 2-3).

Rural colonia settlements

Although most Hispanic Americans live in communities within metropolitan areas, many Hispanics reside in non-metropolitan areas and rural settlements. Hispanic rural residents along the Texas-Mexican border live in unzoned, unprotected squatter communities of campers, tents, and lean-to shelters; just one step away from being completely homeless (Brannon, 1989).

In California, over 500,000 Hispanics live in numerous small rural communities varying in size and complexity from unstructured ranchos to towns and cities. Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas add nearly 1 million rural Hispanics to California's rural number. In California, for which there is data, nearly 70 rural communities have been found to have a majority of Hispanic people in each, ranging from 50 to 98 percent of the population. The average town size is 6,000 people. Most residents of these communities are of Mexican descent and most are farm workers or employees in agribusiness. Recent research (University of California, 1989 and Rochin and Castillo, 1991) indicates that during peak periods in agriculture, the population of Hispanic settlements is substantially enlarged with the presence of migrant farm workers. Since annual earnings in farm employment are typically well below the poverty level, the Hispanic residents in rural settlements constitute a large proportion of California's rural poor (Gwynn, et. al., March 1990).

The concern with these communities is that they show signs of becoming centers of rural underclasses of Hispanics, populated by an impoverished working people laboring to support themselves via the agricultural economy. These communities have relatively low tax bases and hence lack many of the public amenities needed to provide adequate health care, schooling and safety (Rochin and Castillo, 1991).

On the other hand, the subordinate position of colonia residents has been sustained by agribusiness and immigration. The overwhelming dominance of large farms and their dependence upon low-skill labor means a political alliance of agribusiness firms to support liberal immigration. There is and has been little enforcement of immigration laws in agricultural areas, which also means that farmers can take advantage of the massive population growth in Mexico by ensuring an abundant supply of workers. Under these circumstances, farm and agribusiness interests are well-positioned to dictate wages and working conditions and hence the welfare of rural colonias and Chicanos.

Summation

Given its history and growing size, the characteristics and conditions of the Hispanic American community in rural America have critical social, economic, and political implications. In considering these, it is important to separate image from reality. The popular image is one of migrant and seasonal workers working temporarily in farmers' fields before moving on to other employment. The image is also of a young, single male, uneducated, but prone to unionization and membership in the UFW.

These images no longer hold. Rural Hispanics have changed in character and so have their conditions. Many Hispanics are rural residents with non-farm employment. The formation of colonias shows an increasingly permanent and settled rural Hispanic or Chicano population. Because of IRCA and previous historical patterns of immigration, Mexican immigrants are here to stay. The newcomers include Mexican Indians, urban Mexicans and people of all ages. More Mexican women have immigrated than in times before.

The Mexican settlement is geographically concentrated in rural areas. Today their communities conduct daily business in Spanish and many have fewer opportunities for learning English, if they wanted to. Within colonias, education is a perplexing problem. Although many Mexicans recently entering the U.S. have more schooling than previously, education among most non-Hispanic Americans has advanced even more. We know little about the educational and income mobility of colonia residents.

Part III: Trends of Hispanic-Americans in agriculture

Patterns of change

Hispanic Americans have become increasingly important in rural America because of several evolutionary changes. What was once a rural society of predominantly white persons of European origin has now become a society of widespread racial and ethnic diversity. What was once a fairly homogeneous rural economy of tremendous strength is now a diverse rural economy that is dwindling in importance relative to GNP and national employment. In short, rural America is vastly different from fifty years ago and so is America's food and fiber system.

Agriculture's national role for income generation and employment continues to shrink. Total hired employment in agriculture has declined steadily from an annual average of about 3.7 million workers, in 1960, to about 2.5 million today (Table 8). That is a remarkable decline, especially considering the amount of output and surplus that is produced by our agricultural sector. Today, there is no state where agriculture is the most important source of employment or generator of income for workers.

Along with the decline in agricultural employment has been a steady decline in the number of people living and working on farms (Whitener, 1991). In 1960 the farm population of 15.6 million represented 8.7 percent of the nation's total. In 1970 it was 4.8 percent. In 1985 the farm population was estimated at 5.3 million people, and constituted less than 2 percent of total population nationwide (Table 8).

Implications of larger and fewer farms for rural Hispanics

Along with the decline in the mid-sized farms has come the concomitant reduction in family farm labor, and the associated decline in the farm population. This trend suggests that we will face a decreasing number of young people, domestic workers in particular, who will be available to work on America's farms.

These changes have several implications for farm labor and Hispanic Americans (Rochin, 1989). With larger farms, we can expect that farm skill requirements will gradually rise, on average, throughout the United States. Larger farms will require more workers for more specialized tasks, because large farming operations will tend to be more profit driven and more apt to use new technology with more productive workers. This pattern is particularly evident in California.

The trend is also implicitly evident in Table 8, wherein we see a steady decline in people employed less than 150 days per year, i.e., those who are usually temporary, semi-skilled harvest workers.

Another implication for farm labor is that the work hours, pay scales, and supervision will be more structured on large farms. In many states already, the conditions of work and supervision are being monitored more closely by federal and state authorities. Maybe there is in this pattern a blessing in disguise for farm labor. In general, as the farm reaches a higher level of size and skilled workers, it will have to be monitored and operated more closely by the profit driven growers and government officials. If the tasks of monitoring are done according to law, then farmworker conditions should improve as well as the conditions facing Chicanos in "fields of pain."

We might now ask, "What about the future of rural Hispanic Americans? Where are they in these trends?" Well, the changing structure of farms that we have observed has plenty to do with the future of Hispanic workers.

There is in the United States a distinct racial and ethnic bias to the employment pattern of hired labor in agriculture (Figure 1). Out West, Hispanic workers are needed by larger farms to perform specialized tasks (Table 9). In the southern states African Americans are concentrated on larger farms. Apparently, larger farms in the West and South tend to employ more ethnic minorities for specialized tasks than do mid- or small-farms (Table 9).

In the Midwest, however, where we also see the decline in mid-size farms, the picture of minority farm labor is not so clear. We know that in the Midwest we do not have a long history of major proportions of minority workers employed on farms. However, we do know that the Midwest is the place of consistent employment of migrant and seasonal workers during the summer, especially of Mexican-origin workers (Valdés, 1991).

Agriculture is an important source of income, employment, and training for Hispanic Americans (Oliveira, 1992). If domestic Hispanic workers (and those who have been legalized as SAWs and RAWs) are going to continue working in agriculture, then we would certainly expect more Mexican workers to be drawn into this sector. I expect that in the South farmers will still be hiring domestic Black workers be-

Table 8. Number of hired farmworkers by days of farmwork: 1960 - 1985* (Numbers in thousands)

		Days of Hired Farm Work				
	Hired Worker Total	Fewer Than 150	150 and Over	% of Total	Farm** Population	% of Total
1960	3,692	2,864	828	22.4	15,638	8.7+
1965	3,099	2,468	631	20.4		
1970	2,487	2,009	478	19.2	9,712	4.8+
1975	2,638	2,055	583	22.1		
1979	2,651	1,893	758	28.6	6,051	2.7
1981	2,492	1,817	675	27.1	5,850	2.6
1983	2,596	1,861	735	28.3	5,789	2.5
1985	2,521	1,732	789	31.3	5,355	2.2

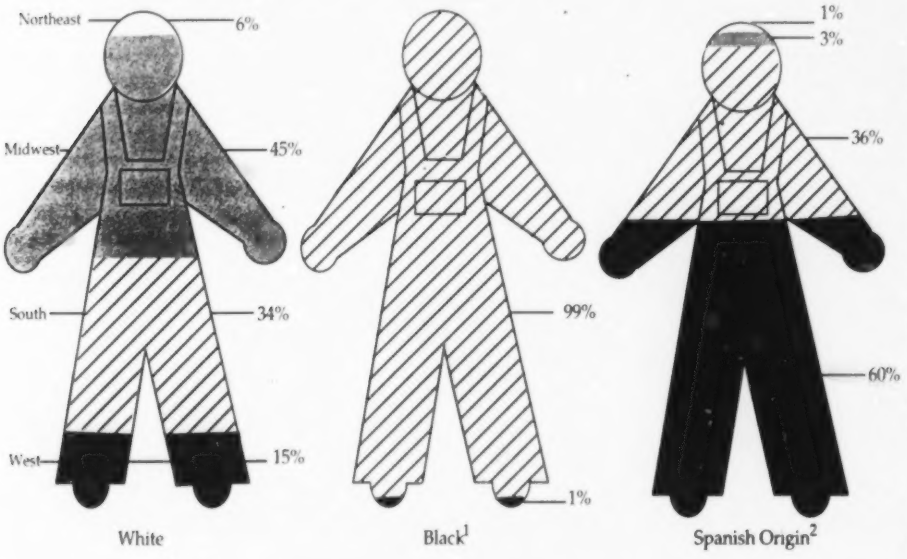
*Source: Oliveira, Victor, J., and E. Jane Cox. "The Agricultural Work Force of 1985: A Statistical Profile" USDA/ERS/Ag. econ. Report 582, Washington, DC, March 1988.

**Source: US Bureau of the Census/USDA "Rural and Farm Population": 1987. CPS, Series P-27, No. 61. Pre-80 Farm Definition (See Appendix).

cause they still constitute a large pool of unskilled labor. I expect in the West that agriculture will be hiring more Hispanic (Mexican) workers because of the large labor supply (especially from Mexico) and established family networks of field laborers. I am not sure what is going to happen in the Midwest with regard to Hispanic workers. Nonetheless, I wonder who is going to be working on Midwest farms, especially if the average farm size continues to specialize and grow and if there is a steady exodus of mid-sized owner-operators out of farming.

FIGURE 1.

Regional Distribution of Farm Residents, by Race and Spanish Origin: 1984



[1] The Black farm population in the Northeast and Midwest was less than 500 and rounds to less than 1 percent.

[2] Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

Table 9. Demographic and employment characteristics of all hired farmworkers by geographic region, 1985 (thousand)**

Characteristics	U.S.	N.East	Midwest	South	West
All hired Workers	2,522	265	851	826	580
Racial/Ethnic Group:					
White	1,922	249	832	486	356
Hispanic	326	6	11	129	181
Black & Other	274	10	9	211	43
% White	76.2	94.0	97.7	58.8	61.4
% Hispanic	12.9	2.3	1.3	15.6	31.2
% Black & Other	10.9	3.7	1.0	25.6	7.4
Number of Migrant	159	6	47	65	42
(%)	(14.9)	(2.3)	(5.5)	(7.9)	(7.2)
Primary Employment:					
Attending School	718	85	294	199	141
(%)	(28.5)	(32.1)	(34.5)	(24.1)	(24.3)
150 Days Farmwork	789	102	211	260	216
(%)	(31.3)	(38.5)	(24.8)	(21.2)	(37.4)
Non-Farmwork	560	57	212	180	112
(%)	(22.2)	(21.5)	(24.9)	(21.2)	(19.3)
No. in Veg. Fruits & Hort.*	587	67	61	192	267
(%)	(23.3)	(25.3)	(7.2)	(23.2)	(46.0)

*Refers to the crops worked with most on the farm where respondent worked the greatest number days in 1985. The CPS data is collected in March and tends to underestimate Hispanic workers.

**Source: Oliveira and Cox, 1988. See Appendix for Regional Breakdown.

Mechanization versus "Mexicanization"

Mechanization has been a traditional weapon for large farms to reduce use of workers and to under-cut the bargaining power of farmworkers. Mechanization gives growers an alternative, albeit an expensive one, to paying higher farm labor wages.

During the demise of the Bracero program in the 1960s, mechanization and its consequences were widely studied. But the predictions raised about declining employment opportunities and declining producer competitiveness never materialized. Martin (1983), for example, warned that: "The $18 billion U.S. fruit and vegetable industry is increasingly reliant on illegal immigrant labor. By postponing mechanization it is becoming vulnerable to cheaper produce from other countries" Martin and Olmstead (1985) later argued strongly for the control of immigration and further development of mechanization. According to Martin and Olmstead: "The illegal or undocumented nature of the farm work force indicates a need to support mechanization research programs in order to create more desirable jobs and to keep the American fruit and vegetable industry competitive in the international economy" (Science p. 606).

Instead of mechanization, "Mexicanization" followed, a term coined by Palerm (1991) in his study of Mexican and Chicano colonias. It was certainly confirmed by IRCA's provisions. In describing how Mexicanization works, Palerm (1991) pointed out that there is in effect a long-standing culture of migration between Mexico and the United States where we have the same workers going back and forth to the same employment areas and employers,

then passing this tradition on from generation to generation of Mexican farmworkers.

This process has created a stabilization of California's agricultural labor force that we rarely talk about. It has also contributed to the growth of colonias and the increasing numbers of rural residents of Mexican origin. The process involves large numbers, upwards of 1 million persons entering annually from Mexico to rural America. And the process is unchecked and growing.

Implications of "Mexicanization"

Five decades of Mexican workers in the U.S. agricultural economy (dating back to the Bracero era) have driven most other U.S. workers who have options out of seasonal migratory farmwork, and out of rural communities. Mexicans and Chicanos are now shouldering the bulk of fruit and vegetable harvesting responsibility in those states where this production is concentrated. Recruitment for available jobs is done largely through Mexican families and friends and by labor contractors whose Mexican roots and residential connections enable them to muster hundreds of workers from villages in Mexico and Central America on short notice, and literally guarantee their arrival at harvest sites in California or Washington within a four day period.

Spanish is increasingly becoming the language of the fields, spoken by labor contractors and workers and rarely by farm operators or by most Black or White U.S. citizens or Asian immigrants in search of farm employment. The implication is that if an individual cannot speak Spanish, their prospects for obtaining migratory or seasonal farmwork are almost non-existent.

Likewise, Mexican/Chicano farmworkers who speak Spanish only and who have little formal education or English training, may face unsurmountable obstacles when and if they attempt to make the transition to the world of nonfarm employment. By settling into colonias, they become bound to rural communities of protection and culture. But they also become increasingly isolated from the rest of the United States which is non-Hispanic.

The free trade agreement

U.S.-Mexican relations are improving, especially with regard to the possibility of reducing trade barriers between nations. At this time, Mexican, Canadian and U.S. negotiators are working on NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. It is unlikely to be followed in the short run by the migration of goods and services rather than labor. For the United States, the likelihood of reduced immigration and "Mexicanization" is weak even with NAFTA. Both the supply of Mexican workers and the demand for them are strong at this time. Some studies have predicted that the jobs in Mexico will be produced gradually over the 1990s and will depend upon Mexico's policies for "privatization" and its investment climate for U.S. dollars (Rochin, 1992). At the same time, however, Mexico is abolishing its system of farm *ejidos* (which guaranteed usufruct to land without title) by allowing its farmers to both own and sell their land. If Mexican peasants sell their land, then where will they go? If landlessness occurs – as feared by Mexican academics – then will social pressures mount in Mexico resulting in a greater push of workers to the United States and into colonias? For now, we have no answers.

Summation

Farming and the size and number of farms are very different today compared to the 1940s and earlier. The trend toward fewer mid-size farms has reduced the number of family workers. The trend towards larger farms has increased the farm sector's hired labor requirement in regions with larger farms. Operators and hired workers must have a variety of skills to perform more sophisticated tasks (operating heavy equipment, computerized drip irrigation systems and applying chemicals). The changing nature of agricultural work has probably made many tasks more risky and unhealthy.

The numbers, activities and working conditions of the agricultural labor force are very different from previous decades. In the West, however, the diversity of jobs has not changed the composition of workers. Many more are Mexican, but many are trained in a wide variety of tasks. While many hired farmworkers are harvesting fruits and vegetables, many others are shearing sheep, pruning roses and Christmas trees, cultivating mushrooms, stocking fish ponds and herding cattle.

Apparently, the "Mexicanization" of agriculture will prevail for more years. With the free trade agreement in effect, the flow of immigrants from Mexico will heighten the "Mexicanization" process. As this process continues, the likely place of rural settlement will be within colonias. Such communities will need increasing public attention as they will be responsible for the human capital formation of the future's labor force of Hispanic-Americans.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper I stated my plan to broaden the focus of rural Hispanic Americans and to avoid the single issue of migrant and seasonal farmwork. I believe it is now clear that rural Latinos, Chicanos, etc., constitute a diverse population within a larger demographic trend that is changing social and power relationships between people. By the year 2000, Hispanic Americans will be called upon to carry a bigger role in sustaining the wealth of this country.

I am not suggesting a move away from studies and policies of farmworkers. The "Mexicanization" of "fields of pain" is a questionable phenomenon whereby workers are employed in back-breaking jobs when mechanical implements can do the job. Mexican-Americans in agriculture are still exploited and work under inhumane conditions which include unsuspected toxic chemicals and high rates of sickness and accidents. Child labor is still evident and little is done to assure children's education and preparation for a technical society. Few children are taught the legacy of their ancestors or the contributions they made to American food and fiber. Hence, few have much knowledge of their history, which could be a source of inspiration.

Immigration will continue to be an issue related to rural Hispanics. Immigration from Mexico is most profound and significant in the Southwest. It is more complex today with the influx of Mixtecs and other Indians from poor regions of Mexico. The realization that half

the Hispanic Americans are foreign born should signal the need for policies that deal with acculturation (but not assimilation), English-language training and ethnic relations.

The current discussions between Mexico, Canada and the United States for a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) portend possible impacts in our agriculture. I expect the agreement to get Congressional approval by June 1993. I also expect U.S. agricultural producers to face a phased-in, 5-10 year period of tariff and non-tariff reductions. There should be ample time for more studies of the NAFTA's impacts on immigration, labor requirements for U.S. fruits and vegetables and environmental matters. Rural Chicanos will be affected but so will immigrant Mexican workers.

Rural settlement and colonia formation are here and now. Chicanos are the majority in a significant number of border communities and in towns in primary agricultural areas like California's Central Valley. But higher education and Colleges of Agriculture have not responded to the potential for recruiting and educating rural Latinos from these neighboring towns to study agriculture and natural resources. The migrant farmworker image is too strong in the mind-set of Anglo educators. Speaking from personal experience, very few of my U.C. Davis colleagues in agriculture imagine Latinos as scientists and future leaders in agriculture. They are mesmerized by the farmworker syndrome and not sensitized to the positive strengths of Chicanos.

Public policy analysts have sought for decades to improve the lot of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Now they must broaden their focus and work on ways to improve the lot of rural Chicanos and Latinos. Such analysts will have to learn more about the global economy, patterns of international migration and about the processes of "Mexicanization" of fields and colonia formation. They may have to learn Spanish!

Focusing exclusively on farmworkers will only deal with a part of a population and not the whole population that has much to offer rural America. But also, rather than addressing a disadvantaged population presenting endless social problems, Hispanic Americans should be looked upon as a potential source of strength for the society and economy of the nation. There is a need to encourage the production of "success stories" and progressive practices of Hispanic farm producers, labor organizers, etc., who represent what's right in American agriculture.

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Appendix

Definitions and explanations

Farm population. In the Current Population Survey, the farm population as currently defined consists of all persons living in rural territory on places which sold or normally would have sold $1,000 or more of agricultural products in the reporting year (for the CPS the preceding 12 months). Persons in summer camps, motels, and tourist camps, and those living on rented places where no land is used for farming, are classified as nonfarm. The current definition was introduced into the P-27 series beginning with the 1978 farm population report.

Under the previous farm definition, the farm population consisted of all persons living in rural territory on places of 10 or more acres if at least $50 worth of agricultural products were sold from the place in the reporting year. It also included those living on places of under 10 acres if at least $250 worth of agricultural products were sold from the place in the reporting year.

Persons living on farms located within the boundaries of urban territory are not included in the farm population. Urban territory includes all places with a population of 2,500 or more and the densely settled urbanized areas defined around large cities.

Nonfarm population. The nonfarm population includes rural persons not living on farms plus the urban population.

Geographic regions. The four major regions of the United States for which data are presented represent groups of States as follows:

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont.

Midwest: (formerly North Central): Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia.

West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

Race. The population is divided into three groups on the basis of race: White, Black, and "other races." The last category includes Indians, Japanese, Chinese, and any other race except White and Black.

Spanish origin. Spanish origin in federal reports is determined on the basis of a question that asked for self-identification of the person's origin or descent. Respondents were asked to select their origin (or the origin of some other household member) from a "flash card" listing ethnic origins. Persons of Spanish origin, in particular, were those who indicate that their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American or other Spanish origin.